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WHY HAVE A CHURCH?

By FRANK CHODOROV

RESEARCH JUN 23 '53 LIBRARY

THEOLOGIANS, being men of good will, should not be too hard on a layman for venturing into their domain. I rely on such indulgence. If, however, my temerity arouses resentment, my defense will be a countercharge; namely, that many eminent theologians pontificate in fields in which they are at least as incompetent as I am in theology, and my right to be wrong equals theirs. In fact, it is the volume of politico-economic bilge being turned out by these preachers that prompts me to ask: why have a church?

The query, and the reason for it, should be prefaced with my concept of the function of the church; it is crude, I am sure, and superficial, but it is one that I share with many laymen. Most people, I believe, would say that the business of the church is religion, and that the concern of religion is with the human soul. Just what the soul is I leave it to the experts to say; but what I have read on the subject holds that the soul is the essence of the individual. It is a personal and non-transferable possession. There is no such thing as a collective soul. The Bible says that God made man in the likeness of Himself; it does not say that He made a society or a nation in His image.

It is a religious tenet that the soul, though always below par, is susceptible to regeneration. The Christian doctrine has it that in the beginning the human soul was perfect; that in the exercise of his free will, which is his particular endowment, man made a bad choice and as a consequence his soul fell from its exalted pinnacle. It is man's continuing obligation to try to get back to his original state, or as near to it as he can in this life.

The job of soul-saving, of trying to achieve the ideal, which is God, is a personal one. Nobody can do it for the other fellow. The experts, the churchmen, having trained themselves for that purpose, can offer guidance and advice, but in the final analysis the impulse for regeneration must come from the person himself. If the soul could be raised by some external device — then the premise of free will is negated. If free will is ruled out, what happens to the soul? And, inferentially, what happens to religion, or the church?

The purpose of the church, then, as I conceive it (probably an over-simplication), is to help the individual lift himself up spiritually; to teach him self-examination through meditation, to hold before him the highest ideals in thought and behavior, to inculcate in him a reverence for God. But, all this is an inner experience of the individual alone.

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NOW, THIS SIMPLE CONCEPT of the function of a church gets a severe jolt when it runs into the politico-economic literature put out by religious bodies these days; there is plenty of it, as anyone whose name gets on a mailing list knows. When you shake down the wordage of these books and pamphlets you come to a residue that sounds like this: The individual has a soul, to be sure, and we can leave it to God in His inscrutable way to take care of that detail; more important is the fact that the individual is a complex of habits acquired from his surroundings, and the best way to get at his bad habits is to rectify his environment. The most important factor in his environment is his material circumstances. It therefore behooves the church to apply itself to man's economic condition; make that better and the product will be automatically improved.

But, what can the church do to better the material circumstances of its parishioners, so that they may thus become better Christians? For answer, these "modern" religionists — whether consciously or not — must go to socialism. This is quite logical, for it is from that ideology that they get the doctrine of economic determinism above referred to. The socialistic formula is quite simple: take from those who have and give to those who lack. Since only the State, with its monopoly of police power, can do the taking and the giving, the church must ally itself with the State; it must become political.

To illustrate the point, let us take a statement from one of the books that has enjoyed wide reading among clericals. I select it because it is succinct, quite to the point, and unencumbered with the circumlocution characteristic of "advanced" Christian literature. "Until Christians" — this is from *Towards the Christian Revolution,* edited by Scott and Vlastos — "learn to understand and apply the lessons of Marxism, they cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

This identification of the teaching of Christ with the teachings of Marx (sometimes embellished in this literature with praise for the Soviet Union) is done with much explanatory dialectics. To the knowledgeable Marxist, the explanation must be most unintelligible. For, to him the idea of a soul is nonsense; there ain't no such animal; it is one of the fictions invented by capitalists to befuddle the proletarian. And as for the Kingdom of Heaven, he equates it with bread and butter, here and now. The way to get men into that realm is to give each a pound of butter and a loaf of bread, daily — the giver being the State. But, if the State can do that, a simple mind reasons, what purpose does the church serve?

Then, again, Marxism makes no bones about using force to achieve its particular kingdom. The Christian doctrine of love has no place in that doxology; the individual must be compelled to make adjustment to the perfect environment prepared for him. And

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so, the Marxist-Christian says (this from *The Economic Order and Religion,* by Knight and Merriam): ". . . the Christian has failed to get a philosophy of force. . . . He has been unable to see that even good ends require the use of force, and that the ethical problem, when ethics ventures into the market place and the state house, is precisely the problem of the use of power over the people." But, the State has a monopoly of force and knows how to use it; what place has the church in this picture? Unless, forsooth, the end-purpose of these Marxists-Christians is to have the church take over the aforesaid monopoly.

IT SHOULD be pointed out that most of the "modern" Christian literature is not so forthright in its advocacy of Marxism. I selected these quotations because they have the virtue of being unequivocal. On the whole, the advocates of environmentalist Christianity, following the practice of neo-Marxists, eschew the old-fashioned labels; they espouse collectivistic measures without identifying the background philosophy. They simply propagandize for bigger and better social security, non-discrimination laws, government intervention in industry, socialized medicine, federal aid to education, housing subsidies, prohibition, unemployment handouts — in short, for what is called "social legislation". Many groups, not content with slow-acting propaganda, maintain political lobbies in Washington for the purpose of pressuring Congress into passing the laws that will presumably make better Christians of us. (See *Church Lobbying,* by Luke Ebersole.)

Now, churchmen have as much right as do other citizens to advocate political intervention. They too have free will, as the Christian doctrine holds, and if they choose to espouse Socialism or Communism they are simply exercising their God-given prerogative. No one can object to that. It is their consistency that is in question. If the human being can be made "good" by law, what need is there for religion or the offices of the church?

According to the doctrine of environmentalism, human behavior results from psychological reactions to external influences and has nothing to do with personality. In so far as these external influences are materialistic, and in the main that is what they are, the way to get "good" behavior is to control, manufacture or manipulate these influences. That is a matter of scientific planning and force. In a nutshell, the way to make men "good" is to squeeze them into a "good" mold — the mold having been politically prepared and the squeezing done by the police — and let them harden. But, if that is true, if Christians can be manufactured that way, why bother about teaching ethics or sermonizing about the soul? Religion then becomes a department of politics.

Suppose we accept this environmentalist doctrine and follow it to its logical conclusion. Somewhere along the line of study and experiment, the perfect environment will

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be found, and in time all men will make adjustment to it and will therefore become perfect. The regeneration of the soul will presumably have been effected. After that, there will be only the chore of keeping that environment from getting out of kilter. The State will take of that. And what will the church do? Having helped the State to accomplish the ideal, it will either have to go out of business or take over the functions of the State.

AT THIS POINT in his cogitation, the amateur theologian calls to mind the fact that at various times in history the church and the State were one. There was little or no distinction between law and religion, between priest and politician. And in those times, it is interesting to note, orthodoxy prevailed. Differences of opinion in matters of creed and ritual did not exist, or had no means of expression, and there were no sects.

Only after the State lost its power, or when it began to be split up into small units, did heterodoxy show up. That is to say, the advent of political freedom brought in its wake a release of conscience, and religion branched out in different directions. The Protestant Reformation is a case in point; its divisiveness increased with the decentralization of political power.

From this historical fact one can conclude that when the State becomes top dog it does not permit heterodoxy. It cannot afford to be wrangling with a variety of beliefs, and it certainly cannot tolerate the existence of an organization that proclaims an authority higher than itself. It probably cannot suppress religion altogether, because there seems to be a human need for belief in an order of things not subject to human vagaries. But, in its effort to maintain the perfect environment, the State cannot be hampered by a multitude of sects, each claiming superiority over the others. The best it can do is to adopt one and cast the others out.

Now, there are environmental determinists in nearly all the religious camps; the believers in salvation through political power are ubiquitous. When they shall have conjointly succeeded in subjugating the individual to the State, the problem of ascendancy will arise: which church will the State select as its own, or, putting it in reverse, which one will become the State?

That, however, is for the future. The question at hand is: if environmental determinism is the answer to man's fall, why have a church?

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HUMAN EVENTS

FRANK C. HANIGHEN, *Editor* FRANK CHODOROV, *Associate Editor*

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Korea: "It's not the heat, it's the hypocrisy" — is a current "gag" which serves to express disgust both with the weather and attempts to morally justify the settlement in Korea. It also mars the natural happiness that springs from promise of an early end to the futile blood-letting.

But few leaders on the Hill privately deny that the settlement represents a defeat, perhaps the first real frustrating defeat in American history. It is hard to conceal shame over the surrender of the POW's to what is obviously a Soviet-dominated commission. While there are various assurances that we will not sell out our Chinese Nationalist allies, there is little confidence that this will not occur.

Politicos now show caution about the effect of the truce on GOP popularity. At first, the windup of fighting seemed likely to prove a big asset this year and next when elections take place. But in the past few days various announcements have modified the picture — the draft will continue, fathers may be conscripted, a big army must still be kept in Korea, etc. And it now appears that termination of hostilities will save only about a billion dollars this year and that amount may be spent on reconstruction in Korea. Indeed, there are limits to the fruits of the truce.

Those who have long wanted to "get out" of Korea and bring the boys home are deeply troubled by two aspects of the settlement:

1. It's still a UN truce and will probably be a UN peace. The desire of men like Taft is to keep us free from costly and dangerous entanglements arising from UN membership. What looms is an expensive Korean "rehabilitation" program and perhaps a vast Point IV spending spree in the whole Far East.

2. The Administration has not yet, but should ere long recognize the reality of the defeat and investigate the reasons thereof so that we can in the future avoid a repetition. Congressional committees might well probe such matters, calling Generals MacArthur, Van Fleet and Ridgway to explain why real victory was not achieved — victory, for which (as MacArthur said) there is no substitute.

Not Merely Gossip: Governor Dewey's influence over the GOP apparently stops at New York's state borders, judging by an incident in Washington last week. The New York GOP Congressional delegation, numbering 45, gave a dinner to the new National Republican Chairman, Judge Leonard Hall, himself from the Empire State. Tongues wagged about the seating, at the speaker's table, of former Congressman Hamilton Fish, who long represented an upstate New York District. "Ham" is noted, among other things, for his long and envenomed and very public feud with Governor Dewey. He has bucked the Governor and his machine often. Observers — contemplating this dinner scene — wondered if the former Congressman is slated for a federal appointment. If so, it would be at the suggestion of National Chairman Len Hall. And would not this be a sign that Hall is ready to defy Dewey on patronage?

● Len Hall received some much-needed encouragement on that thorny subject of patronage. The GOP organization has been rather sad about the small number of jobs they have been able to wangle since the Party took over power in January. Jim Farley, old Democratic chieftain and job-dispenser under F.D.R., dropped in last week to pay a visit to Len Hall, and told the Republican leader not to be discouraged about the jobs. Such trouble, he assured Hall, also marked the transition period in 1933, when the Democrats, after twelve years out of office, came back to Washington. Jim said that he was not able to get the job machine going satisfactorily before the end of 1933.

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Generally, Hall is taking hold of party affairs very well, in the opinion of many in the Capital. He is supremely good at understanding the grass-roots point of view. From inside the National Committee comes the news that Hall is a great and (at least privately) unqualified admirer of Senator Joseph McCarthy, for the job the Wisconsin man is doing.

● That one-vote Republican majority which gives the GOP control of the Senate may well be increased ere long. So runs the talk in the cloakrooms and it's not considered Republican wishful thinking. Contests of elections have rarely been successful, but the case of the senior Senate seat from New Mexico is looked upon hopefully by the Republicans. It is believed that Democratic Senator Denis Chavez will be deprived of his seat as a result of a probe of his election victory of last November. It is well known that corruption and ballot-fixing have long been a prominent feature of New Mexico politics — to a degree not seen in other states. But this year the Republican Congress and the GOP Governor of New Mexico show signs of doing something about the situation. Whether General Pat Hurley, GOP candidate last November for Chavez' seat, will be declared the real victor, or whether the election will simply be designated as invalid, with a new election ordered — is not known. Anyway, Senate Republican leadership — nervous over the slim margin — now seems much more confident.

The Perfect War Plan: The new plan for reorganization of the Pentagon General Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff has drawn a lot of fire, and not merely from pacifists. Some members of Congress have condemned it as creating a replica of the German General Staff, with wide powers to regiment and centralize the whole civilian economy.

One Congressman who recently visited Germany says that the epithet "German General Staff" is by no means exaggerated. For he had an interview with General Heinz Guderian, Hitler's former tank expert. Guderian apparently had given American military men some help and advice in their efforts to lay out an American version of the German plans, and endorsed the plan now being offered to Congress.

"But", protested the American Congressman, "if the German plan was so good — as you say — how did it happen that you lost the last two wars?" Guderian replied, with a melancholy air, by recalling that both Kaiser Wilhelm and Adolph Hitler thought they were the best generals: "You see, the plan had but one fatal defect. In neither war did it have as head of state a real general. That is why it failed. But, now the U.S. has remedied that defect."

UN and Free Enterprise: The United Nations is a threat to private enterprise. This aspect of the international organization has been brought to public view by Robert S. Byfield in a speech delivered on May 19, to the Illinois United Nations Seminar for Community Leaders.

Byfield, who is UN representative of the New York Stock Exchange, cites two recent examples which should put the business community on guard.

The United States, Byfield remembers, was voted down 31 to 1, in Committee last December, on motion of approval to validate the right of any country to nationalize its industries. The U.S. cast the lone negative vote. Byfield commented: "The joker in the resolution was the failure to mention the need for compensating those foreign investors who had staked their capital and risked their savings in the seized industries."

The other example was the adoption by the General Assembly, by vote of 35 to 15, of a resolution looking towards an international scheme for the support of raw material prices. The U.S. voted "no" along with the United Kingdom, the Dominions, France, the Scandinavian countries and a few others. The Soviet bloc abstained. The resolution recommended a plan which involved restrictive, socialist concepts in international trade.

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On the basis of the above and other observations, Byfield summed up his experiences in UN, as follows: "I feel that in the social, economic and financial fields on every front in the United Nations and elsewhere, the line-up is Marxism-Lennism versus Wall Street." And he explains that the words "Wall Street" have a broader meaning than usually understood. "In the hate campaign of the propagandists, Wall Street is a symbol of a free economy, of private property, of a competitive system, of a voluntary society. In that sense, we are all 'in Wall Street', whether we are bankers or brokers with business offices in lower Manhattan, and whether we work for an industrial corporation in Detroit, raise cattle in Texas, drive a locomotive for the Southern Railway, sell newspapers in Seattle, or own a drugstore in Buffalo. We are 'in Wall Street' if we produce commodities, or perform services in a free market."

Good Big Taxes: Some time ago, the directors of the National Association of Manufacturers voted opposition to an extension of the Excess Profits Tax law which expires on the last day of this month. Therefore, the spokesmen for the organization this week came before the House Ways and Means Committee to argue against extension.

However, it was reported that a recent telegraphic poll of these 164 directors showed that nearly two-thirds had changed their minds. Nothing could be done about revising the organization's policy, since the rule requires a two-thirds vote. But the change in sentiment deserves some examination.

Why did these big businessmen change their minds? If they were asked, they would undoubtedly reply in the words provided by the Administration: that defense requirements will not permit a reduction of taxes at this time. They are patriots. Admitting that, one wonders whether fear of upsetting the economy built on high taxes is not a contributory factor. It is a characteristic of the human being to make a comfortable adjustment to any condition imposed on him by the government, even though at first he may find that condition repulsive; having made that adjustment, he hates to have it disturbed.

In the present instance, the E.P.T. has furnished the government with funds to spend on orders, and even though the dropping of this tax would provide the corporations with spending money, the shift might prove disturbing to those who have been working for the government, or whose customers are in that position. There is always the danger of not being able to make good with a number of small customers, after you have been accustomed to servicing a big customer of unquestioned credit standing. You may not be up to competitive conditions.

This is not to say that these N.A.M. directors are similarly motivated in their advocacy of a continuation of E.P.T. But, it is a notorious fact that Big Business has never put up a fight against Big Taxes, as a policy, although they may fight to save a few dollars on an individual basis.

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Die Geheime Front, by Walter Hagen. Nibelungen Verlag, Linz & Vienna. Reviewed by F. A. Voigt.

Great Britain and, later on, the United States, financed, armed and aided the European "resistance" on the assumption that it would accelerate the defeat of Germany.

But in central and southeastern Europe and, to a large extent in France and Italy, the "resistance" was transformed into a revolutionary movement which subordinated the fight against the Germans to the fight for world revolution.

Thanks to the belief that Russia had undergone a "change of heart" (then as now), to the cumulative effect of skillfully directed and avidly accepted misinformation about the "resistance" itself, and to persistent ambiguity with regard to the meaning of the word "democratic", the western world helped to intensify those revolutionary civil wars which merged into the world-wide Cold War even before Germany had been defeated. Great Britain and the United States thereby advanced and consolidated the

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power of Russia in Europe and enabled her to gain that security in the West which she needs for expansion in the Far and Middle East.

Walter Hagen was a member of the German Secret Service, which was extremely well-informed about the "resistance" everywhere, much better in fact, than the British and American Governments. There are inaccuracies in his book; they are the result of conjecture on matters outside the field of his own observation and have little importance. But when he writes from knowledge — and his knowledge is deep, varied and critical — he makes a contribution to the history of the "resistance" which compels us to see it in a new light, in fact, as the first chapter in the history of the Cold War.

The Polish "resistance" was exceptional. According to Hagen, only one in every five of its members was a Communist. Its leadership remained unswervingly loyalist to the end. That is the reason why Russia destroyed it. According to Hagen, the Germans held the front along the Vistula so weakly that it would have been easy for the Red Army to liberate Warsaw by joining forces with the insurgent Poles. It sacrificed them to the Germans instead. Later on, when it entered Warsaw, it "liquidated" the remnants of the Polish "resistance", put the Lublin Committee in its place, and converted Poland into a satellite state.

According to Hagen, the Slovak insurrection was more formidable than was supposed in the western world at the time. It was not suppressed until November, 1944. It was planned by the Russians and they did what they could to support the insurgents. It failed because it was premature and because the Germans used powerful forces against it. Had it succeeded, Czechoslovakia might have been the first instead of the last European State to become a satellite.

Hagen is right in stating that the assassination of Heydrich, the German "Protector" of Czechoslovakia, was carried out with the help of the British Secret Service, though he does not state that the assassins were flown to the scene of action from England. The deed was not the work of the Czech "resistance" which was one of the least formidable in Europe (far less formidable than the Slovak). It was a useless deed and Lidice was the result. Hagen, incidentally, confirms the report that it was Heydrich who forged the documents which provided Stalin with the "evidence" against Tukhachevski.

The Germans were particularly well-informed about Tito's plans and movements. They caught one of the couriers on his way through Hungary from Moscow to Yugoslavia. They had Tito's secret code and, when he changed it, immediately obtained the new code. They knew of the strict order he gave his *Partisans* to keep the British Mission isolated. (*Eastern Approaches*, by Brigadier Maclean, who was head of the British Mission, proves how successful Tito was: the book is devastatingly superficial, though this has not prevented it from being a best-seller in England.)

In 1943, there was an exchange of prisoners between Tito and the Germans. Thereupon Tito proposed a local armistice, for his chief concern was not the defeat of Germany but the establishment of a Communist dictatorship in Yugoslavia. Neither he, nor Stalin, wanted an Anglo-American invasion of the Balkans. At Stalin's request, he proposed to the Germans that they join forces with the *Partisans* in the event of an Anglo-American landing. What Hagen tells us about this proposal is partly borne out by Dedijer, in *Tito Speaks*, published since Hagen's book appeared, and written in conjunction with Tito himself. When Tito visited Moscow in September, 1944, Stalin asked him what he would do "if the British really forced a landing in Yugoslavia". Tito replied, "We should offer determined resistance."

But the proposal for joint action with the Germans came to nothing. Hitler, when asked to give his approval, said, "I don't negotiate with rebels, I shoot them."

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